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V. ECONOMIC LIFE

SOURCES OF FOOD

AGRICULTURE

The foundation of Tanala economic life is agriculture and the natives cannot conceive of existence without it. During the seasons of planting and harvest all other activities are suspended. Tanala who have entered the employ of Europeans will always specify that they must receive leave at these times to return to their villages to attend to their rice, and will do so even when it entails a considerable financial loss. Every able-bodied member of the tribe takes part in the work and even kings do not consider it beneath their dignity to work on their own plantations. 241 [643]

The account of Ikongo agriculture given by Sadaro Antoine is of such interest that it seems best to quote it in full. He says: "Our crops are rice, maize, manioc, beans, bananas, *voemba* and *kalamaka* [two varieties of ground nut] and many sorts of greens, *anamamy*, *mangevotra*, *anatsonga*, etc.

"The growing of rice is our principal culture and it is the foundation of our food. Our ancestors knew only six varieties: *vary lava*, *vary botrika*, *velonizy*, *vary mandinika*, *bemalady* and *malady*. Rice is cultivated twice a year, the first crop being called *vary aloha* and the second *vary afara*. The Ikongo have three sorts of land: 1. *Tavy* [newly cleared forest]. 2. *Haoka* [swampy land]. 3. *Hosy* [terraced and irrigated land]. The *vary aloha* is sown in the *haoka* or *hosy* in the month *Maka* [July] and harvested in the month *Asaramantsy* [November]. The *vary afara* is sown in the *tavy* in *Asaramantsy* [November] and harvested in *Valasira* [April]. 243 [311] [221]

"This is how the *tavy* is made: The weather is fine, the sun bright. It commences to be hot. The *ombiaty* and *famitra* are in flower, seeds sprout, and the shoots of the *amonta*, *volomboro* and *voamboa* begin to open. The birds *fitatram*, *railonga* and *olily* sing from the trees. These are the signs foretelling the *Sakase* [time for cutting the *tavy*]. The men leave the village and go to some mountain or hollow covered with thick forest. They halt at the edge of the forest and divide the land to make the *tavy*. Each one sets up a mark on his part, the *tampon tany*. Satisfied with the division they return to the village loaded with faggots. The next morning all go to work. Everything, trees, bushes and vines, is cut down. After two or three days of individual work the men begin to help each other (in cutting down

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●243 the larger trees). While the men work the women prepare food and the children fish in the neighboring streams. At noon the workers eat, returning to work after their meal. After about an hour of work they return to the village. The owner of the *tavy* thanks those who have helped him. The clearing goes on for ten or fifteen days. The trees and brush which have been cut are allowed to dry for twenty to twenty-five days. By the beginning of the month *Volambita* [October] all are dry. At noon the proprietor of the *tavy* takes a dry bamboo, his *kapaika*, and goes to the field. He strikes a tree trunk lightly with his bamboo and calls out: 'Oh *fahasivy* [ancestral shades] who live in this neighborhood, go away, for I am about to set fire to the *tavy*. Send away your children, your old people and your blind.' Having said this, he sets fire to the *tavy*. The heat, flame and smoke are enormous. In an hour a *tavy* of twenty hectares will be burned. The fire spreads into the uncut timber and causes great damage to the forest. Some days later the women plant the rice, four to six grains in a hole. The men also lend a hand. With the rice the women plant maize and ground nuts and sow the seeds of plants used as greens. At the beginning of the month *Asaramanitra* [December] they weed the rice, men, women and children working together. After the weeding they gather the maize, which has ripened. A few weeks later the rice begins to ripen and has to be guarded against birds, especially the *fody* [a red bird much like a sparrow] and the *kitreoka* [a little green and yellow paroquet]. This is the beginning of the *salasira*, the rice beginning to turn yellow. The man builds on his *tavy* a rice house, called *homby*. While he is doing this the wife makes *tanty be* [big baskets], *harona* [sacks of soft matting] and *tanty* [ordinary baskets]. On the morning of a fortunate day the wife goes to the *tavy* and plucks a few heads of rice that are still green. The grains are roasted, hulled and ground. This food is called *lango*. The husband takes a little of it on a leaf of *longona* [a broad, smooth leaf often used as a plate] and places it on a flat stone in the *tavy*, speaking as follows: 'Oh *Fahaviry*, thanks to you the rice is ripe. We offer you the first harvest, for we cannot eat before you do. Take the meal reserved for you. Protect our harvest against wind, hail, locusts and wild pigs.' After this prayer the whole family divides and eats the rest of the *lango*. From that moment the rice harvest begins. The rice is cut with *karima* [reaping knives] by the women, while the men carry. It is placed in baskets which the men carry to the *homby* on their heads. The children [244] prepare the food. It is at this time that one harvests the ground nuts and greens.

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nd greens. When the harvest is finished and the rice in the *homby* 243
he members of the family return to the village. They have been
way for five months. The man repairs the *tranoambo* [rice granary]
nd the rice is brought to it from the *homby*, the whole village assisting.

"Maize (*tsako*) is cultivated in the whole region and is second to
ce. We distinguish a number of varieties: *tsakoala*, *saradaja*,
mbosamboritra, *tsakobiby*, *tsakofotsy*, *tsakodoroka* and *tsakorondra*.
Iaize is grown in all seasons, but it is during the hot season that it
ives the best yield. It is sown in the *tavy* at the same time as the
ce, or planted in alluvial soil in the valleys. Small holes are made
ith a pointed stick from 50 to 70 centimeters apart and two or three
rains put in each hole. It is ripe three or four months after planting.
he maize for the next sowing is put in a dry bamboo filled with
shes to keep the insects from damaging it. That which is to be
aten is put in a dry place over the fire or hung up in the granary.
Iaize pounded and cooked in water with beans or honey forms an [252]
xcellent food. We also eat it roasted.

"Beans (*voatelo*) are very common in the region. We distinguish 244
ight species: *voatelokobo*, *voatelosoratra*, *velotompo*, *tsatsakoria*,
nesarana, *voatelo be*, *voatelosakay*, and *voatelosorenosy*. Beans like
lluvial soil or the site of an old village. Like maize, they are planted
n small holes about 50 centimeters apart, two or three seeds to the
ole. They are planted in the month *Sakare* [September] in newly
urned ground. The crop is weeded when the plants have three
aves. At the end of the second month they flower and produce
ods. At the end of the third month the pods break off and are
arvested.

"Manioc (*kasaka*) attains a height of 2 to 3 meters. There
re two varieties, *kasaka ala*, which is best, and *dempatry*. It is
lanted by cuttings, which grow readily, even in very poor soil. It
s planted in the month *Sakamasy* [August]. When the ground is
eady, holes are made about a meter apart and a cutting put in each
ole, care being taken to place it horizontally. It is weeded about
orty-five days after planting. At the end of seven months one may
egin to gather it. The root is sometimes eaten raw, but is more often
oiled or roasted in hot ashes. The root is also preserved by cutting
t in pieces and drying it in the sun."

The above account needs to be supplemented in several details. 241
In agriculture by the *tavy* method it is necessary to allow the land
to lie fallow for from five to ten years between plantings. The
growth which springs up during this time consists mostly of bamboo,

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343 in one end and often a shallow porch, formed by the overhang of the roof. The size of the *homby* is very variable. Some are not more than 4 feet square, while others are as much as 8 feet long by 5 feet wide. They serve for the storage of tools and equipment as well as grain and may even be used as sleeping places if the fields are far from the village. The door is reached by a ladder made from a notched log. Inside, the rice is stored in large baskets about 2 feet deep and 2 to 4 feet in diameter.

251 Most of the Menabe keep their rice in the *homby* throughout the season, going to get a basketful at a time. They do this even when the granary is as much as a full day's march from the village. The rice needed for immediate use is usually kept in a basket in the dwelling, although I saw small outside granaries in a few villages.

343 The Ikongo granaries in villages are built on the same lines as the *homby*, but are of better and more permanent construction. In a few cases the walls and floor are made of planks instead of woven bamboo. The supporting posts are larger and more smoothly polished, and are provided with wooden disks, 2 feet to 2 feet 6 inches in diameter, which are placed between the posts and the floor as an additional protection from rats. At the present time, inverted tin dish pans are often used for this purpose.

On the western edge of the Ikongo territory there is a limited use of clay granaries, copied from the southern plateau tribes. These are conical, 4 to 5 feet in diameter and 6 to 8 feet high. The walls are 8 to 10 inches thick and may be solid earth, but are more commonly of wattle work heavily daubed. They are smoothly plastered, inside and out, with a mixture of clay and cow dung which is bright red in color. The only opening is a small door, about 2 feet square, which is placed high up in the side. The top is heavily thatched with straw. Subterranean granaries of the sort used by the Betsileo and Imerina are unknown among the Tanala.

251 The rice in the granaries is likely to become moldy and the owners will take it out from time to time and spread it on mats in the sun.

243 The Menabe transport their rice to the village in the head and thrash it a little at a time, as needed. The heads are laid on a clean mat and the grain trodden out with the bare feet or beaten out with a short club about 1 inch in diameter and 18 inches to 2 feet long (Fig. 1, e). The straw is gathered up and thrown away and the remaining mixture of grain and chaff winnowed by tossing it into the air from a winnowing tray. Three types of winnowing tray are

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in use: a stiff, rectangular piece of matting about 2 feet square, a large, circular tray of basketry with a wooden rim, and a circular tray of light wood (Fig. 1, h, j). Thrashing and winnowing are usually done by women. 243●

After winnowing, the dark skin of the rice grains is removed by pounding in a mortar with a pestle. This is woman's work, although men and boys sometimes assist. The pestles are made from a variety of hard, heavy woods and are finely shaped and finished (Fig. 1, g). They are 4 to 5 feet long and 3 to 3½ inches in diameter at the ends, tapering to a smooth central grip about 18 inches long and 1½ to 2 inches in diameter. A good pestle balances exactly in the center. The two ends are used interchangeably. Three types of mortar are in use. The oldest, now employed only as a makeshift, is made by digging a hole in hard ground and lining it with a smooth coat of clay. A fire is then kindled in it and the clay burned hard. Stone mortars are known, but no specimens were seen and I could learn nothing concerning their form or manufacture. 252 412

The ordinary mortar is of wood, with an oblong top and truncated pyramidal base (Fig. 1, g). Although not set in the ground, it is so heavy that it is rarely moved. In some villages I saw the mortars for an entire lineage set up together under an open roof, with the pestles leaning against a bar beside them. Although the mortars seemed to be used indiscriminately, pestles are strictly personal property. They are made for the women by their husbands and a woman will resent another's using her pestle without permission. Each woman usually does her rice pounding alone, but occasionally two people will pound together, striking into the mortar alternately, in perfect time. This seems to be commoner with half-grown boys and girls than with adults. [422]

When a great deal of rice is being pounded at one time, a stiff sleeve of matting, like a basket without a bottom, is set on top of the mortar. It is not attached to the mortar and is not used at ordinary times.

After pounding, the rice is winnowed again, to remove all hulls and dust. That used at ordinary times is rarely pounded to complete whiteness. Even the best is not polished. The grain is prepared a little at a time, as needed for cooking. 252

Among most of the Menabe gentes cultivation of dry rice by the *tavy* method is certainly older than the cultivation of wet rice. This probably holds for the Ikongo as well. Most of the Menabe have 243

1: Linton E-8 (1926-27) 1933 FY8 Tanala FY8

243 no taboo against wet rice, but rarely raise it, because of the labor involved. The Zafimaniry still have a strong taboo against it.
[173] According to their own tradition, they were the last of the Menabe gentes to settle in the territory. They originally lived in the Ankaratra, a mountainous part of the plateau, and raised wet rice, like the other tribes of this area. Enemies attacked them when their men were dispersed, repairing their rice terraces. They were driven out of their territory and when they re-established themselves, they tabooed wet rice cultivation, which they held responsible for the calamity. The taboo is so strong that when Betsileo immigrants began to cultivate wet rice in their country, some twenty-five or thirty years ago, they broke down the terraces and destroyed the crop.

Tanala wet rice culture is still crude in comparison with that of the plateau tribes. They do not use fertilizer, sow in seed beds, or transplant. Terrace systems are still very rare. The soil of a natural swamp is turned over with spades to a depth of about 1 foot, all but the largest vegetation being dug in. Cattle are then driven back and forth over the plot until the earth is churned to a soft muck. The rice is sown broadcast but not trodden in. Later, the crop is weeded once or twice. The harvest sacrifice is the same as for the *tany*.

241 In addition to rice and the plants grown in the *tany*, the Menabe grow bananas, sweet potatoes and sugar cane. None of these are of
245 great economic importance. Bananas are planted in or near the village, often in solitary clumps. The young plants are sometimes fenced to protect them from pigs, but require no other care. The fruit is small and of indifferent quality. It is cut green and hung up over the fireplace, where it soon becomes blackened with smoke. It is allowed to become soft and thoroughly ripe, then eaten raw. The plantain seems to be unknown.

286 The Tanala do not use banana fiber. The Betsileo, their neigh-
171 bors, formerly used it extensively in weaving and raised certain varieties of banana almost exclusively for it. They claim that it was the first material woven by them.

244 Sweet potatoes are grown from the shoots. Bunches of these are planted in holes at intervals of about 2 feet. The ground is not prepared. New patches may be weeded a month or two after planting, but the growth of the vines is so luxuriant that they soon strangle all other vegetation. The plants begin bearing in six to eight months and continue to produce for two or three years, after which the tubers become small and fibrous. The roots are dug a few at a time, as

1: Lenoir E-6 (1926-27) 1933 FTS Tanala FTS

the village that a ward within the village occupied with relation to the 621
tianas and was the property of the lineage occupying that ward. 423
Actually, the outlines of these lineage holdings were irregular. Their 596
limits were set by natural boundaries and there was an attempt to equalize their value.

At the time of making the tavy, the lineage land was temporarily 621
divided among the various families, but it reverted to the lineage 596
as soon as the crop was harvested. Lineage land, or, more correctly, 425
the right to use it for agricultural purposes, was sometimes sold to members of other lineages within the village. This was a last resort and was only considered justifiable when some member of the lineage had been enslaved and his ransom could not be raised otherwise. It seems that such sales were often considered rather as pledges for loans, for every lineage tried to keep its land intact and would go to great lengths to buy back any which had been sold. When a lineage seceded from a village, it forfeited its land rights and its former territory could be occupied by the other lineages without recompense to it.

Among the Menabe two new developments in land ownership 423
have occurred in recent times. Due to the increasing value of forest 178
products, the lineages now preempt for their members the right to 596
gather honey, wax and raffia within their territories. There is also an increasing tendency toward individual ownership of land. This is correlated with the introduction of irrigated rice culture. The [209]
preparation of rice beds requires much labor and they must be kept in repair constantly. A family which builds a terrace system is felt to have established its individual right to the land and retains it as long as the terraces remain in use. If the land is allowed to lie fallow for any length of time, however, it reverts to the lineage. This development is so recent that, as yet, there seems to be no rule regarding the sale of rice beds to members of other lineages.

Among the Ifungo the rules regarding land ownership seem to [184]
be much the same as among the Menabe except that individual ownership of rice fields is much older and better established. Such fields are inherited within the family and the lineage has little or no right over them.

All property other than land is individually owned. This extends 421
even to the least important tools and utensils. Everything in the 593
establishment, from the house down, belongs to some particular member of the family. These rights of ownership are recognized even between parent and child in spite of the great theoretical power